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HIA REF: 141

Witness Name: HIA 141

## THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

## WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 141

I, HIA 141 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast and I come from a family of nine children. My brothers and sisters are called NL 109, NL 108, HIA 93, NL 33, NL 68, [REDACTED], NL 30 and NL 97 and we lived in [REDACTED] with my mother. I was the youngest. A court order was served on my mother and all my brothers and sisters were removed from her care. I stayed with my mother for around a year but then I was also taken into care. I think this happened because we were being neglected.

St Joseph's baby home ([REDACTED])

2. I began my life in care in the nursery but then I was moved into St Joseph's baby home. I then was moved straight over to the main unit. There are notes that say my mother came to visit and push me round the gardens but I have no memory of that.
3. When I was three I was left sitting alone on the kitchen worktop in St Joseph's beside the teapot by the staff of the home. Someone had gone to answer the phone and left me alone. I lifted the teapot, poured it round myself and it spilled all down my front. I got first and second degree burns down my face

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and front. I was young and inquisitive and I just lifted it. There are no doctors' records for me and I don't remember seeing any medical person about it. I just remember my mum coming to see me then and she said that I was unrecognisable. I do remember having the mumps when I was 4 but don't remember anyone ever coming to see me about it.

#### Nazareth Lodge

4. There were three groups in Nazareth Lodge. I was in SR 29 group, NL 109 NL 108 HIA 93 and NL 33 were in SR 46 group and NL 68 NL 30 and NL 97 were in SR 62. I was kept separate from my brothers and sisters. My brothers and sisters came to visit me and they used to look through the fire doors which had glass panels at me but I didn't know who they were. I never felt loved. They were all together in different units but because I was the youngest I was on my own. I always felt alone. I never remember having any other children or toys to play with. I just used to sit and make daisy chains out in the green area. I remember NL 30 and NL 97 had toys outside like swingball. We used to get together on days out to Portrush or maybe events like Christmas parties. I had no idea who my brothers and sisters were, just that they were waving and coming over to hug me. We got to sit on Santa's knee and got a present given to us to have our photo taken. As soon as the photo was taken, the nuns took the presents from us and we never saw them again. It was all for show.
  
5. My first day of primary school was horrible. I remember I was marched down a corridor and taken to the door and told to go on in. SR 29 just left me outside the door. I had no support or help. I used to ask the older children to help me but all they used to do was beat me up. There was no-one else from my unit in my school. The school was within the grounds so we just walked across the courtyard to it. It was separate to the residential unit and was called St Michael's primary school. There were other children from the community there because I didn't know any of them. After I left care I also went to school on the Road.

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6. **SR 29** was in charge of our unit. She was very wicked and I remember an incident when she forced food into my mouth. It happened at Sunday lunch and I was the only one left at the table. **SR 29** sat at the top of the table with her arms folded and told me I had to eat my food even though I didn't want anymore. She turned my chair around to face her and put two brussell sprouts on the fork, swished them around the gravy and shoved them into my mouth. I was immediately sick all over her and she slapped me in the face, dragged me out of the kitchen and put me into the room and closed the door. I still have a gagging reflex from that. I never saw her doing that to anyone else. The food was horrible. For breakfast I got cold toast and sometimes porridge. As soon as you arrived into the unit Sister **SR 29** also used to cut our hair and you were left that you didn't know if you were a boy or a girl. I felt that my identity was stripped. I was always afraid in that place. When they spoke to me I would put my hands up because I never knew what was going to come next. The clothes I wore were always from the storage cupboard that they had in the home.
7. I had a social worker called **NL 110** but although she was the longest standing social worker she never helped me. The only time I saw her was when she came in the front door straight into **SR 29** office. Any time I was brought in there the door was closed. **SR 29** was always there so I never got a chance to tell **NL 110** anything. I think **SR 29** was afraid to leave me alone with her in case I said anything. The Sisters and the social workers never got down to my level, as a child and they were always looking down at me. I always just looked at the ground because I was afraid of looking into their eyes because I was so afraid of them. Other female staff in the unit made me stand on top of a tin mop bucket and do all the dishes and I was only five or six. I was made to do this every other day. I don't remember their names but I was smacked a lot by these staff members and I also remember **SR 29** used to put me over her knee and use a leather strap to hit me. She used to keep this in her drawer. I recall one social worker **NL281**. He was the one that got us out but after that I don't remember ever seeing him or anyone else. There was no one that kept an eye on us.



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8. **SR 29** was like a black shadow that followed me everywhere. I can also remember **NL 5** was looking after my brothers and sisters in **SR 62** group. She sometimes came to my group and she used to wave her fist at me. She was not a nice person. **NL 30** and **NL 97** were in the unit next to mine being looked after by **SR 62** and **SR 62** made them both eat a bar of soap to wash their mouths out for their sins.
9. I wet the bed until I was fourteen and I remember that I just lay in the wet sheets. I remember having to change my own wet bed sheets. I was trailed out of my bed, the sheet put over my head and I was made to say prayers for it.
10. I shared a big room with one other child. There was an older girl called **HIA363** with blonde hair who checked on us during the night. She was helping me do my homework one night and my sisters in the next unit could hear somebody crying. They didn't know who it was until they heard her smacking me harder and harder, screaming at me and saying I was thick, that I had to do it and that **SR 29** had put her in charge of me. She continuously punched me in the head until I cried really loudly. My sisters came into my unit through the fire doors and there was confrontation between her and my sisters. The Sisters came in like riot squad, took **NL 33** by the scruff of the neck and threw her against the unit. They slammed the door shut, didn't ask about what was happening and we were left there until morning time. I could never sleep at night time in that place and I still can't sleep to this day.
11. I remember they took us to Portrush and someone took photographs of me lying in the bed sleeping. Nine of us were taken on that holiday. There is also a picture of me and my brother and sister sitting on a hill just down from the guest house but I have no recollection of the guest houses.
12. When I was given back to my mother at the age of five or six, she was a complete stranger. There was no aftercare to see how we getting on. I didn't realise that I had a different daddy to the rest of my brothers and sisters. Their daddy died of cancer and I was always led to believe that he was my father as

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well. I always felt different to the rest of my siblings, I have different colourings and mannerisms. When I was in my twenties my mother took me to the grave and I realised that he died in 1971, five years before I was born.

### Life after care

13. When I was fourteen I ran away and stayed in a third story flat on the [REDACTED] Road. There was a guy who my friend knew called [REDACTED] and he was staying in the flat. I brought some clothes and some tins of food. The first night was fine but on the second night he came home, got undressed and told me I had to get into bed beside him. I said no. He threatened me with a hammer and a metal rod. He put the radio on and he took my pyjama bottoms down. He played around with me down below and told me I was a dirty wee tramp. He sexually assaulted me for three hours. My brother and my friend's dad came to the door and brought me home. I later found out that he was put out of [REDACTED] for sexually abusing people. I know he has sexually abused people in Dublin and Scotland.
14. When I was fifteen or sixteen my mum let me go to the local disco but she never trusted me. On one occasion when I was seventeen I was raped by a man called [REDACTED] in his flat in the [REDACTED]. He was politically connected so I couldn't do anything about it. All my mum could do that night was beat me up because I was five minutes late. I have since reported this incident to the police. I was rebellious but I was only trying to block out the hurt. I have sniffed glue and taken drugs just to take the pain away. My mum got pregnant with me but when she told my father he just said he already had a family. I took a lot of abuse from my own mum. When I came back from running away, she had gone out within half an hour of me returning, telling my sister to keep an eye on me. It was my sisters who brushed my hair in the mornings.
15. I was bullied in secondary until third year until I couldn't take it anymore and started to fight. I left school with no GCSE's. I witnessed a traumatic incident on the [REDACTED] one day. A foot patrol of soldiers was ambushed straight



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in front of me and a young soldier was shot several times. I didn't want my mum to know I had been there so I had no real help. The school wasn't very helpful. [REDACTED] my teacher helped me sort out giving my police statement but she ripped up the compensation form and said I wouldn't need that.

16. When I was twenty two I was going to end my life because I couldn't cope anymore. This was around the time that I realised I had a different father who was still alive. I met a girl through my son's [REDACTED] class who pointed out that I was very like a man she knew called [REDACTED] and his children. I have reason to believe that he might be my father but I don't think I want to meet him. I have to take tablets everyday to survive my mental state. Everyday getting up is a challenge and I don't even feel like I belong in society. I can't even talk to people, people in jobs of authority and people in uniforms. I have passed my mental health onto my children. My seven year old has autism and my fifteen year old child has behavioural problems and is currently being assessed. He was expelled from his secondary school and was sent to [REDACTED] for a term.

17. I have memories of going to the court and the Judge saying that I was being sent back. I remember on the day of my first holy communion my mum took me back to the home to show me off. I thought I was being sent back and I wet myself because I was so scared. I missed out on all the times with my mummy and I was neglected. My family don't want to know me because I have come to the Inquiry. I live with my kids in a smaller town so I won't be recognised. I have appeared in two newspapers and my mum, brothers and sisters have told me that they don't want to know me anymore. I have spent the last four Christmases alone with my kids.

18. I applied to Voypic and I went to the Good Shepherd on the Ormeau Road to get information about my life in care. I was meant to do this with my sister [REDACTED] but she is an alcoholic and I can't have that around my kids. She has brought a lot of trouble to my door.

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19. I spent two years of my life in [REDACTED] in the night shelter for homeless alcoholics. I have been going to counselling for two or three years on a weekly basis. It's hard dealing with the emotional side of it that I have been carrying around for years. It is actually physically painful. My life is just one big mess. I am trying to look after my own kids and make sure they never go into care. I've been to see psychotherapists and have attended counselling in the past. I intend to go back to have more counselling because it is helpful. I have been diagnosed with anorexia nervosa and have attended the Clare Adams clinic to help me with that. I also have anxiety and have trouble sleeping. I have never actually felt like a grown up even though I know my kids need a mum. That's the only thing that has stopped me ending my life.

20. I hate the Catholic church and I now have support through my church family in [REDACTED] church. It has taken me a while to be able to have a faith because of everything that has happened to me.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed

**HIA 141**

Dated

18/6/14

## RESTRICTED (when complete)

Continuation of Statement of:

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She would strike me on the head with a knuckle. On one occasion when I was about 9 years old she struck me on the head and made my nose bleed. This is when I was polishing the floor and she slipped and she hit me with a bunch of keys. It really hurt me but I was not given any medical attention for my injury. I remember that when I was 11 years old I got my first period and was bleeding as a result. I went upstairs to speak to **SR 116** who I would describe as follows: 25-30 years old, 5 feet 7 inches in height, slim build. I remember that she was quite pretty but I can't remember any other details. When I spoke with **SR 116** in the laundry room at the home she dismissed me by saying "What do you want me to do?" and slapped me across the left side of my face with her right hand. I begun crying and did not know what to do and I had to use paper toilet rolls I found in a toilet downstairs. I was really frightened by what had happened as I was only 11 years old. On a daily basis I would see **SR 119** and **SR 29** physically beating other children in the home often very badly. I remember once seeing another girl called **HIA 37** I was about 12 at the time. **HIA 37** was grabbed by her hair by **SR 119** and dragged physically up a flight of stairs and into the top room. She was screaming and crying but none of us could do anything about it. It was terrible. I was finally able to leave the home when I was 14 years old. I think it was around 1965. I feel very traumatised by the treatment that I suffered at Nazareth House in the years I was there and I cannot put it all into words. **HIA 39**

Certified a true copy of an original signed document

Signature of witness:	
Signature witnessed by: (Appropriate Adult)	



J.H.I.

Nazareth House,  
Westwood Road,  
Bexhill-on-Sea.

6th. April '00

Dear **HIA 37**

Thank you very much for your letter. I am pleased to know how well you are doing.

Regarding the education of the pupils at Nazareth House P. Sch. (as Principal of the school) I can honestly say that I was sincerely interested in the well being of the girls. My main concern was that every pupil should have the opportunity of attaining her potential and I know I did this to the